

Flowering Rush - (*Butomus umbellatus*)



Photo Credit: Kim Bogenschutz, Iowa Dep't of Natural Resources



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Flowering rush is an exotic plant that has been introduced into several Minnesota counties. It is an aquatic plant that can grow as an emergent plant along shorelines and as a submersed plant in lakes and rivers.

This exotic was likely brought to North America from Europe as a garden plant. Unfortunately, it also grows well in wet places. While single flowering rush plants are not a "problem," this exotic can form dense stands which may interfere with recreational lake use. Flowering rush may also crowd out native plants and in turn harm fish and wildlife.

General Characteristics:

- Easiest to identify when flowering. Flowers grow in umbrella shaped clusters and each individual flower has 3 whitish pink petals. Plants only produce flowers in very shallow water or on dry sites.
- Flowering rush is very difficult to identify, especially if it is not in flower. It closely resembles many native emergent plants, such as the common bulrush.
- Green stems that resemble bulrushes but are triangular in cross section.
- Along shore, erect leaves and grows to about 3 feet in height. The leaf tips may be spirally twisted. Under water, the leaves are limp.
- An extensive root system that can break into new plants if disturbed.

Spread of Flowering Rush:

Flowering rush is probably spread over long distances by people who plant it in gardens. Once in a watershed it spreads locally by rhizomes and root pieces that break off and form new plants. Muskrats may use parts of the plant to build houses and probably contribute to its local spread. Boaters can transport flowering rush on their equipment. Water and ice movements can easily carry flowering rush to new areas of a water body.

Flowering rush does produce seeds but studies conducted by Bemidji State University and Queens University, Ontario, indicate that only one population in Minnesota's Forest Lake produces fertile seeds. This may explain the rather slow rate of long distance spread of flowering rush compared to the exotic plant purple loosestrife, which does spread by seed.

What You Can Do:

- Learn to identify Flowering Rush
- Do not purchase Flowering Rush for your aquatic gardens as it is sold for this purpose
- Inspect and remove aquatic plants and animals from boat, motor and trailer
- Drain lake or river water from live well and bilge

Know the rules!

Specimens are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit or discourage possession and transport of Flowering Rush and other invasive aquatic plants and animals. Contact the nearest Ministry of Environment office or call the TIP line at 1-800-667-7561 or Ron Hlasny, Aquatic Biologist with Fish and Wildlife Branch at 1-306-953-3242. Unauthorized introduction of plants or fish into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.